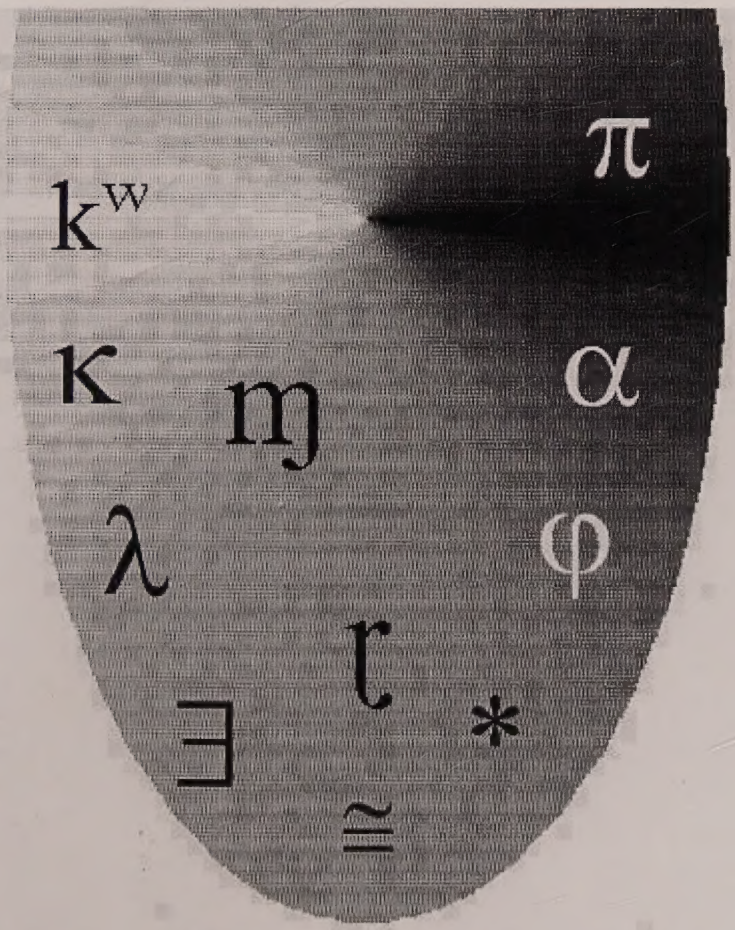
Tongue's Palette

Poetry by Linguists
edited by
Andrew Sunshine & Donna Jo Napoli



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... each task must be performed not
just with handthinking but rather with
the engagement of the entire relevant
opposite cerebral cortex.

For Emily Norwood Rando, in memory

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Judith Bishop: "Late in the Day," *Verse* 15.3/16.1 (1998).

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Paul Friedrich: "Taráscan Pots," *Mississippi Valley Review* 14.1 (1984), 54 (also in Friedrich's *Bastard Moons*, Chicago : Waite Press, 1979, 12); "Poem of Life," *Bastard Moons*, 14 and *Reflections: The Anthropological Muse*, J. Iain Trattis, ed., Washington D.C. , 97; "Tarascan Country" ("Indian Country"), *Bastard Moons*, 10 and *Reflections: The Anthropological Muse*, 96; "A Russian Asymmetry," *Bastard Moons* ; "To Boris Pasternak" in Friedrich's *Music in Russian Poetry*, New York : Peter Lang Press, 1998, 216.

Chin W. Kim: "Yoyoma, Enchanting One," *Classic People* [a Korean magazine devoted to classical music] March 1996, 24.

Adam Makkai: "Cultured Dill," *Magazine Art* 8 (Summer-Fall 2002); all other poems included here are from *Thirst and Vinegar.*

Joseph Malone: "De Arce Arborum," *Reflect* 12:4 (Spring 1992), 35; untitled paragraph beginning "One late winter afternoon as I returned," *Paragraph* 2:1 (Summer 1988); ["rain in the pear trees"], *Reflect* 15:4 (Spring, 1995); "Recessional" and untitled poem beginning "Climb the house-blocked knoll at night," *The New Press* 8:1 (Spring 1992).

Introduction: Drafts and Fossils

Sometimes I cramp my fingers round a pencil,
And set it racing o'er the pad …

Edward Sapir, "The Stenographer"[1]

This is the fifth in a series of volumes of poetry by contemporary linguists (Napoli and Rando 1979, 1989; Rando and Napoli 1983; Strahan, Napoli, and Rando 1994), by which we mean nearly anyone engaged in the study of language to understand what language is and who therefore identifies him- or herself as a linguist. (Institutions and organizations have also played their role here, if only because they have provided vehicles through which work was solicited.[2]) Some of the contributors will be familiar to readers of previous volumes; some appear--in this series at least—for the first time. Many of the contributors have published their poetry in literary journals; a few have published volumes of their own poetry. The work included here is greatly varied in style, form, and theme. Most of the poems are original works, but there are a few translations (either of the poet's own work or of another poet). With some exceptions (noted in the credits), the bulk of these poems are published here for the first time.

Since there was no requirement that submitted poems overtly invoke linguistics in some way (although a fair number do), what makes us so sure that our editorial vase—poems by linguists—makes for an appealing and coherent anthology? What makes us think it will hold water?

In the introduction to the first of these collections, the editors wrote: "No poet is as aware as a linguist of what she is doing when she uses a slightly skewed assonance, alliteration, or other metrical tool" (Napoli and Rando 1979:xv). Implicit in this statement is the recognition that linguistics enjoys some special intimacies with poetry—and conversely. "One thing that distinguishes poetry from other contemporary arts," Paul Friedrich (one of our contributors) observed about the same time (1979:458), "is that it draws and distills from natural skills that are mastered by everyone and used by everyone all the time." Those natural skills, the vehicles through which they are exercised (sound, form, grammar, society), and the exercise itself of those skills constitute much of what linguists study. Of course, anything that sensitizes one to the world, anything for which one has affection, provides a condition for poetry because poetry involves our capacity for affection. From the perspective of poetry, however, the object of interest to the linguist is not just another object in the world: it is the stuff from which the tissue of poems is spun.

Moreover, the relationships between linguistics and poetics has been a fertile area of inquiry over the past 75 years and linguistics has played an influential, even transformative role in poetics whether through the writings of linguists such as Roman Jakobson (or, for that matter, several of this volume's own contributors) or through the movements of literary structuralism and post-structuralism. The influence of linguistics on poetics and literary theory and criticism has carried over into the writing of poetry, or at least reinforced certain trends that may have other sources.[3] I am thinking here especially of poetries involving the formulation of "algorithms" and rules for the creation of texts (for example, the work of the writers affiliated with Oulipo in France and occasionally L = A = N = G = U = A = G = E poetry in the US).

A collection of poems by linguists therefore does seem to have a historical and theoretical charter. Whether knowledge or metaknowledge of language in its various facets carries over into the writing of poems by linguists is a fair question to pose to linguists who write poetry. In contemplating the present volume, it seemed important to pursue this question in a manner that previous volumes had not. We therefore sought to elicit from the volume's contributors how they relate their work as linguists to their work as poets. The responses we received range all over the place. Some, but by no means all, contributors have consciously sought to integrate these two disciplines. And several contributors have been especially influential thinkers about such questions.

This extra-credit assignment was, admittedly, a lot to ask of people who are already overtaxed with written work and who by inclination and education would probably need an extended period of time (not to mention a grant) to prepare a statement that would represent their best-considered answer. Two other factors probably compounded the difficulty of this added burden: (1) the vague formulation of the request; and (2) the requirement that responses be brief. It is no wonder then that some of the contributors did little more than nod in the direction of the question or indicate (gently) their exasperation with it.

To what degree therefore the statements summarized and cited below fairly represent their authors' views, we cannot say; but just as we hope that the authors appreciate the spirit in which we imposed this assignment on them, so too do we hope the reader will appreciate the limits of what can be accomplished in this regard within the covers of what is first and foremost a collection of poems.

So, are there connections between the authors' activities as linguists and as poets?

"Yes," Jorge Guitart writes, "there is and no there isn't a connection."* Perhaps he is saying that there are bound to be connections between linguistics and poetry—connections abound potentially between all manner of phenomena and experience (all it takes is the will or need to find them).

Other contributors' efforts to characterize the connection range across personal background and life experience, thematic materials, the possibilities of expression suggested by the grammars of "other" languages, analytical and technical understanding of the basis of a poetic effect, and insight into how form suits function in discourse. Here are some of the things they said.

Of her own poetry, Marcia Haag writes, "linguistics has altered it much less than one might predict. A technical understanding of language does, of course, serve the craft. I find that I am more confident than previously to bend phrases and to risk certain lexical choices. With respect to phonological phenomena, however, I am much stricter: I pay much more attention to vowel quality, and especially metrics—not 'poetic meter', but linguistic prosodic processes." Koenraad Kuiper also feels that his work in linguistics has "little impact on my poetry … in the creative phase…. [I]n the editing phase," however, "knowing what the language is doing technically can help. For example in looking at the way a stressed vowel sequence goes you can understand why some sequences

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* *"Linguists who do poetry are like poets who do linguistics in wanting and not wanting to be wan (and the seym). Forced into a category they escape only to return, unashamed but untreated for small cuts and bruises. Yes there is and no there isn't a connection. Yes there is and no there isn't a predilection. The verbal sciences and the verbal arts occupy the same temple as go-karts-that and the fact that there was only radiance and renaissance where we came from and the same where we were going before and after we stopped to do research and write, or to write and do research. It is fun both ways."* **Jorge Guitart**

"Writing poetry is not an extension of my work in theoretical linguistics, at least not at any level I am aware of. If it is comparable to anything I do, I suppose that would be improvisation in jazz. In jazz one improvised on a sequence of chords. In poetry the counterpart of the chord sequence is an emotion. Each poem is a new definition of that emotion in the same way that each jazz solo is a melody I have never heard before." **Samuel Jay Keyser**

appear to work better than others. Same goes for any rhetorical patterns in syntax."

Marilyn Merritt traces her interest in language to her childhood experiences of verbal art.† So do Dina Dahbany-Miraglia, Mirjana Dedaić, and Dan Slobin who also refer specifically to their upbringing in multilingual households and communities, and to the emphasis placed in their cultures on verbal creativity.

It will come as no surprise that many of those who have gravitated toward linguistics as a calling have had considerable prior schooling in the reading of poetry and often, at least informally, in the writing of poems. Marcia Haag, for example, says "I was writing poetry long before I began to study linguistics." Similarly, Dan Slobin writes: "My experiments with poetry antedate my explorations of linguistics as a discipline." Such representative experiences perhaps suggests that in many cases a person's eventual interest in linguistics is a sort of refinement of an interest in poetry.

Many of our contributors are professionally engaged with languages not only to learn about Language, but to pursue interests in

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† *"For me, linguistics is related to poetry in that both derive from my early love and awe of language and its forms. When I was small my father taunted me with the middle verb ambiguity of 'Ride me'. My mother smiled when I followed the example of migrant cotton pickers and called her "mamasita" asking for "webbles"(sic) for breakfast. When I was nine I was thrilled to study French once a week after school with a delightful woman from Normandy who had married an American soldier and returned with him to our rural midwest. Fables and fairy tales at my grandparents' houses and the public library made other times and other places seem not so far away, and more exciting than dangerous. Singing and word games and advertising jingles put words with rhythms, and probably the earliest poems I remember are those of song lyrics. Singing and writing, I discovered, could be ways of playing with language on my own, outside the circles of family and friends and school. Writing letters onto paper once brought a free package of Post-tens, once a too expensive bathing suit (for which I was scolded), and much later a scholarship to Northwestern. It was an English teacher there who first encouraged me to write poems, and my husband Gary who spurred me on with his response in kind. Poetry is for me the power of language to see and to feel, and to capture some sentient essence that can be reanimated in those who recite or hear or read a poem."* **Marilyn Merritt**

ethnography, folklore, and literature. Knowledge of other languages, of course, affords access to other literatures, their tropes, genres, and the nuances of thought and feeling these embody or evoke. Dell Hymes, who has written poems throughout his life, has written extensively about oral narrative, and cites in particular his discovery that such texts are organized in lines (see Hymes 1981, especially 309ff.; also 1991) Dina Dahbany-Miraglia's research has covered not only "Yemenite Jewish language, dialects, regional and status-linked," but also "a multiplicity of verbal genres both oral and written." The context for Friedrich's "A Russian Asymmetry" was provided, in part, by his own essay "Semantic Structure and Social Structure: An Instance from Russian" (Friedrich 1964). Friedrich also contributes a translation of a Marina Tsvetaeva poem which he did in collaboration with the students in a Russian literature course he taught. Our volume incidentally includes a small number of poems-in-translation. None of the translators directed their comments to the links between translation and linguistics. Perhaps these are too obvious or profuse to merit further discussion. From Marianna Toce Gerstein we received a translation of Wang Wei (dedicated to Paul Friedrich). Although he himself has translated extensively (some of these are included in Malone 1997), Joe Malone actually contributed no translations apart from a brief riff from Ovid in his personal statement (quoted below). Malone has also written and taught on the practice of literary translation, English language meter and prosody, and comparative prosodics, among many other topics, in addition to his work in linguistics.[4] Several of Mirjana Dedaić's poems are actually translations of her own work written originally in Croatian. Likewise Chin Kim's contribution is a translation of a poem he wrote originally in Korean. Kim periodically teaches a seminar on stylistics and speaks of his "abiding interest in the relation between language and literature." He cites Roman Jakobson as an especially important influence on his thinking.

What of this relation? Where does language end and literature begin? What are the immediate constituents of the poem? What happens when you look at the poem as a linguistic structure? What happens when you look at grammar as an aesthetic entity, as a potentially poetry-bearing system? A language contains much that, to the native speaker, is of no literary value, but may acquire it out of context or in translation. Sapir's observation (1949 [1921]:244) that "[s]ingle Algonkin words are like tiny imagist poems" (an interesting use of poetic simile) captures something that, we suspect, eludes Algonkin speakers, whatever pride they might take in their language, much as comparable phenomena in other languages tend to elude their native speakers. This is because, as Clifford Hill puts it, language is "a system through which meaning can be automated." For many day to day purposes, the soundest linguistic

infrastructure is that which obtrudes least into the speaker-hearer's consciousness (much as with the plumbing in your house or the software on your computer).[5] One way to see this infrastructure—albeit a problematic way, as the history of the language sciences attests—is through some form of estrangement from the language. Thus, to the non-native student or learner of a language nothing is automatic, nothing can be taken for granted, everything is strange or new, and the task of distinguishing between what's emically significant and insignificant is a slow and halting process through which one makes many false analogies with familiar phenomena and then searches for apter (but still essentially false?) ones.[6] Sapir's simile doesn't tell the trained linguist much of technical consequence; his purpose in using it (so it seems to us) was to show his lay readership the appeal of grammatical study. The specific way he chose to do so offers itself as a prosodic resource, however unusual, to anyone who cares to use it. Marcia Haag alludes to experimenting with this, although not in a mechanical way (and not with Algonquin specifically). She writes of drawing "suggestions" from Native American languages including "some of the metaphors of their idioms and compound words; the increased use of clause conjunctions … closer attention to aspect in verb forms." Paul Friedrich's contributions reflect his own interest in using the "poetry of grammar" to devise a "grammar of poetry" (to use Jakobson's rhetorical figure). Thus, "Taráscan Country," he writes, "reflects years of fieldwork among the Taráscan Indians and, more specifically, how long words derived through the derivational morphology can become fresh images in English." (See also Friedrich 1979:486-487.) Similarly, his "Catalysis" is anchored in the "perfective/completive aspect."

Where perhaps Haag and Friedrich like to draw on systemic features of language, other poets draw on less structured phenomena.[7] Dipika Mukherjee, for example, says he uses "kinship terms and code-switch[ing in his poem "Generations"] so that it is almost bilingual..., a strategy that I hope evokes a sense of layers of meaning in the text."‡ Chin Kim takes advantage of an interlingual pun in his "Yo Yo Ma," in what may be one of the least rule-constrained sorts of linguistic phenomena with which to write a poem.[8] All of these importations—of

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‡ **Dipika Mukherjee** continues: *"I wanted to evoke the strong pull of both the traditional and the modern, but not express the theme as a journey from oppression to freedom. I think women have always shown strength in many ways and that is a concept that is sometimes linguistically easier to express and understand through the use of one word (shakti) in an Indian language than by using multiple adjectives in English."*

patterns, terms, or phrases—enrich the English of the poems in which they appear, but do not change our sense of the poems' "Englishness." However, in Zhiming Bao's "Affixes are Words, Too," the protagonists are languages (English and Malay) in contact (or combat) and the poem ends with a series of contact forms.§ This poem participates in, is changed by, is a product of the sort of linguistic/creative process that is its subject.

Some of the work included here makes thematic use of linguistics as a social and intellectual phenomenon. Linguistics figures in Cotter's "The Bernoulli Effect" as a component of the poet's intellectual and emotional life. In it, Cotter intercuts notes from a class in Phonetics and Phonology** with various images, impressions, and recollections from other domains of experience. The generalizations about phonation (e.g., "Pressure in rapidly moving air is low so articulators come together") unexpectedly acquire a gnomic quality when juxtaposed to accounts of internal states or experiences; and the texture of such statements is foregrounded.

Are there similarities between the respective vantages of linguistics and poetry on language? Joe Malone despairs of finding any. "Sure," he writes, "both faculties crucially involve language; but not necessarily in the same way, or even in the same cerebral (and/or spiritual) hemisphere." To Yolanda Rivera-Castillo, however, "Linguistics and poetry each represents one of Janus' faces. These guard the doors to both intellectual and emotional worlds." "The only common thread" Dan Slobin discerns between his love of poetry and linguistic research "is

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§ **Zhiming Bao** provides the following glosses:

makan 'eat'

kacang 'bean'

ber- verbal prefix (as in "*ber*drink")

-an nominal suffix (as in "milk*an*")

** *"'The Bernoulli Effect' was conceived in Fall 1990, in my first semester as a graduate student in John Ohala's Phonetics and Phonology class at UC-Berkeley. The one-line stanzas are quotations from my class notes. 'Scarlet Runner Beans' was a later Berkeley-era effort, influenced in part by the local 'foodie' culture that cuts a swath through the Linguistics Department, as well as by the vitality and diversity of the San Francisco Bay Area."* **Colleen Cotter**

attention to form–a propensity common to both endeavors."†† Malone, on further reflection, observes that the linguistic patterns he delights in finding "replicated across different languages in time and space" appear to him in "technicolor," and color infuses his poems to a high degree.‡‡

If there is a connection between poetry and linguistics, Deborah Tannen writes, it must be "my love of language and attention to its inner and outer workings, its lilts and tilts, the sheer rhythm and sound of it." Similarly, Rivera-Castillo suggests that her infatuation with rhythm in Spanish poetry led to her interest in suprasegmental phonology. To quote the poet (non-linguist) James Schuyler (1997:109), "hearing is itself suddenly a kind of singing."

Perhaps, then, engagement with linguistics contributes in two principle, but somewhat antithetical, ways to a linguist's poetry. First, as Kuiper's and Haag's comments suggest, it gives one a better grasp of the mechanics of language and the secondary order of mechanics of prosody which enables the language to speak in new ways, ways that are not part of the poet's routine, everyday ways of speaking. Secondly, it heightens appreciation for the artifice in natural language—and in routine, everyday ways of speaking.§§

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†† *"Writing poems pulls me to self and sensory experience, to memory and images and the synesthetic realm where words and sounds and colors and textures become one. Doing linguistics pulls me in the opposite direction–to analysis and to the separation of dimensions of experience, so that they can be related to each other systematically, rather than intuitively. Perhaps what all of the endeavors have in common is a never-ending search for patterns and a joy in catching glimpses of them."* **Dan Slobin**

‡‡ *"Most of my own poetry is also infused with color (at least so I feel), often to the tune of explicit descriptions ("… simple yellow earrings / on Clara's unpierced ears. Red and green forever / her hair, her eyes …"). But is that enough to count as a real answer to the profound question of connectivity sought? Who knows! Let us rather go and visit Ovid as he sings 'it was Summer, hot in early afternoon … the window shutter was part open and part closed, and the light was like that of a forest. And then Corinna was there, clad in a loose tunic, the braids of her hair down across her white shoulders …'"* **Joseph Malone**

§§ *From* **Lise Menn***'s "Naturalist": "I write my poems like I write my papers / Close to the data, taking their constraints / Not from a prophet's unifying vision / But from the ebb and flow of what is*

In either case, the focus is on the immanent properties of language (its sound and its formal play); and, in extreme cases, this occurs at the expense of the transcendent dimension (the semantics, reference or grammatical meaning of the poem) because the audible, articulated body of the poem (in harmony, antagonism, or counterpoint with its grammatical meaning, if any) is a significant part of what poetry communicates (or perhaps we should say, it is a significant part of the experience of the poem). To paraphrase Octavio Paz (1973: 12), the poem is language set free—free of, among other things, its routine functions and meanings: "Words, sounds, colors, and other materials undergo a transmutation as soon as they enter the circle of poetry."

Paradoxically, this releasing of language from its everyday bondage involves violence (of a figurative sort) to language itself. Thus, Judith Bishop, who cites Paz, states that it is "the poet's sacred duty" to "overturn the sense of words in the service of meanings which could not otherwise be spoken."*** And she finds that her expertise in linguistics

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seen / Tasted, heard, and felt beneath skin-thin / Murky or translucent surfaces."

*** *"The goal of every word of the poet is to 'become no word', to tender a phrase by Octavio Paz. The word in poetry resembles an uprooted weed, soil adhering to its roots, which the poet pulls and replants, its leaves in the ground. Thus inverted, the sense of the word evades its central functions in the semanticist's net and becomes all that feeds that net while remaining hidden from it: its broader associations, the shape of its sound, its sensation in one's mouth; all the emotional strata which were its underside. Recently, these lines came to me as the onset of a poem, intuitively ringing sound: 'To fall half-way/ would be accomplishment enough '. The lines' charge, I later pondered, exists in uprooting the involuntary word 'fall' by means of a telic word, 'accomplishment'; and, to a lesser extent, by means of 'half-way'. To overturn the sense of words in the service of meanings which could not otherwise be spoken: this, to me, is the poet's sacred duty. To be a linguist is to be able to call by name most plants in the garden of language; and, knowing their habits of growth, to be able to discern, as a poet, the clearest, most chromatic and most resonant ways of pruning, turning, training that growth otherwise—and Other-wards. The poet's love of the hybrid, the thorn-bearing, the gnarled and the emergent ensures the stock of language will never dwindle to infertility. But the linguist's sympathy and tolerance for neologism*

helps to fulfill it. Similarly, for Clifford Hill, if language is "a system through which meaning can be automated," poetry is an occasion for "sabotag[ing]" (deautomatizing?) language.††† Hill acknowledges that this needs to be elaborated further: poetic language itself tends toward automatization. Arguably, this automatization is itself a vital process: it is the "fossilization" of poetry that, according to Emerson, yields language (1940:329). Thus, the dynamic of verbal table turning is exercised not only between literature and the language system (or, differently, kinds of usage), but within the literary system itself. Moreover, to regard language as (in Friedrich's words), "among other things, rough drafts for poetry" (1979:479) can be a way to "sabotage" poetry so that the unspoken voice of language, which is what poetry essentially is, may be heard.

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in language is the house from which the poet sets out in all weathers.

"As a phonetician and phonologist of intonation, my knowledge allows me to make explicit the nature of the poetic rhythms I love, such as the line of Dickinson's, I heard a Fly buzz - when I died -, and to mend my own, in somewhat self-conscious fashion. But having arrived at linguistics through poetry, rather than the converse, the desire to apply such empirical understandings to poetry does, admittedly, take second place to the poetic inversions, spins, and deconstructions a grounding in linguistics facilitates." **Judith Bishop**

††† *"As a linguist, I attempt to understand language as a system through which meaning can be automated. As a poet, I try to use it as an instrument through which automation can be sabotaged. My work as a linguist tends to be metalinguistic in that I typically use words as tools for understanding words. My work as a poet has a metalinguistic dimension, but it is ultimately metaphysical—not in the modem philosophical sense of understanding the world, but in a more primitive sense of reclaiming the many worlds that language as an automated system has rendered inaccessible. These worlds demand a language of their own, and it is this language that we can call poetry. "* **Clifford Hill**

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Notes:

[1] The poem is quoted in Flores 1986.

[2] The Linguistic Society of America deserves a special mention in this regard, since it was kind enough to publish a call for poems in its Bulletin (number 172, June 2001, p. 5, to be exact).

[3] We should note, however that the influences were reciprocal. Jakobson often speaks of the influence of Mayakovsky and of Khlebnikov on his thinking.

[4] *The Alembic Space* will present a selection of Malone's writings on poetics and on translation just as soon as the editor can find a publisher for it. To varying degrees, the writings collected in the manuscript for this volume draw on Malone's background in linguistics or are continuous with it; to that extent they are academic exercises. An even stronger source for these writings is his own practical experience as a poet and translator.

[5] Everyday experience, however, is rife with situations, not in the least pathological, in which the speaker-hearer's attention is drawn to the structure of his or her language (dialects/languages-in-contact, second language acquisition, children's language). Perhaps the optimal functional model of language would provide for its own contemplation.

[6] This is a loose paraphrase of Becker 2000, particularly Part IV. Becker, incidentally, was a contributor to Napoli and Rando, eds. 1983 and 1989.

[7] In the poems cited here, interlinguistic phenomena or experiences provided the happy occasions for creation. Some of the editor's contributions to this volume involved unstructured linguistic phenomena within a single language. "Versus" exploits certain accidents of spelling. "Eugenics" plays with the polysemy of the verb *bear*, as well as the suggestive sound of *eugenics*. Finally, "Poem (Pulled Word by Word out of a Hat)" represents itself as an old-fashioned exercise in aleatory writing, as though such experiment could ever yield a sonnet (the form this poem happens to assume). Matters of accident are presented as though inevitable, as natural facts.

[8] As he explains in a note to his poem, Yo-Yo Ma is the name of a renowned cellist. *Yoyom-a* in Korean means 'an enchanting child'.

Emmon Bach

Berries

blueberry time is over
this piece of earth is brown with oakleaves under my tall pines
my gutters are cleaned out for another fall
first snow has not fallen yet
I wait
all the berries in my mind,
cran, blue, black, rasp,
    not to forget goose

I thank you
elder, lingon, saskatoon, salal, sopalallie
all all I thank you

so then, but now:

last summer, right here, in my tangled yard or space,
I found wild strawberries
and they were sweeter than any I had ever tasted

Rain Song
(twelve-string)

Oh, I grew up in the great Northwest
and I was a forest child.
My land was a land of gentleness
and the rain was gentle and mild.

> And I hear an old man say these words
> from his cratered, ruined plain:
> the bombers came like a cloud of birds
> and the bombs fell down like the rain.

Oh, I'm from out West Texas way
where the land is never plowed.
We used to drive thirty miles away
Just to stand beneath a cloud.

> And I hear an old man say these words
> from his cratered, ruined plain:
> the bombers came like a cloud of birds
> and the bombs fell down like the rain.

Oh, the rain it falls on East and West,
It falls on forests and cars.
It falls on the just, and on the rest,
and it falls on the Plain of Jars.

> And I hear an old man say these words
> from his cratered, ruined plain:
> the bombers came like a cloud of birds
> and the bombs fell down like the rain.

Watchout Song
(square rhythm, banjo)

1. I'm so happy that I could fly
I'm so happy that I could die
Flyin so high, way up in the sky
Watch out: you may be falling

Chorus: High up ima way up
Way up is a long ways down
Maybe you can stay up
Flyin high in the sky hey!

2. Drivin over to my new place
Slow up baby, don't try to race
Member the cars come the other way
Where the hell's my street, Pete!

Chor.

3. Sorry man I guess I just forgot
Didn't really mean to make your fender pop
Go ahead yell, it won't hurt me
I'me gonna go lean against that tree.

Chor.

4. Mebbe some day I won't come down
Keep on flyin around and round
Hey daar, man, ben je niet goed snik?
De hele dag gaa je pik-a-pik-a-pik!

Way up, ik ben way up,
Van zo'n hoogte kun je vallen, diep
diep dat is ook O.K.
waarom blijf je zo vaak away?

Repeat 1 and Chorus.

Zhiming Bao

Moonrise over Tanjong Tokong

We arrived at the crab-eating house
At the end of a fishing village
Tucked away in an obscure corner of Tanjong Tokong.

The tanjong was named after Tua Pek Kong,
An ancient temple with three centuries of incense
Courting the smile of Fortune.

The temple yard was dusty,
Flanked by century-old urns, and the empty stage.
We parked among crab-eaters, and fortune-seekers.

Waves lapped the rocky cape
And a brisk breeze mixed, then dissipated
The smoke from Fortune's altars and from crab grills.

Over the horizon,
An oblong moon sprang out of the waters
And hid behind brush-strokes of gray cloud.

The Padang in Penang

The night is brilliant over the Padang.
Colourful kites float gracefully
Above the fluorescent glare of street lamps.
The moon sits atop the faint skyline of Butterworth,
Its pale face extending, a silvery veil
Over the scaly water of the narrow strait.

The cannons of Fort Cornwallis still defend the Esplanade,
Their barrows silted with the debris of time.
Gone are the soldiers of Francis Light;
Only the walls bear a quiet reminder of the centuries.
Coconut trees soar towards the sky
And casuarinas sway in the sea breeze.

Affixes are Words, Too

When languages battle,
Only nouns and verbs fight.
It's not fair, I say—
Let them *makan* ice *kacang,* if they please,
And *ber*drink soybean milk*an.*

Judith Bishop

Late in the Day

Arrives the moment of contradiction. A rat has sown
its leanness in the earth, a lapse ago;
a hawk, blue stencil, floats low across a field of hay,
resembling, as you see it, the
brushed hair of a child.

Wind has ferried the hawk south
toward a swatch of pines.
There a boy with shaky hands
shoots her down with a stone.
In his fingers,
he gently takes the threads of her entrails.
His eyes reflect a sky sharp as water
from a spring.

In late-shadowed pines,
her young incline toward the sun.
A screen of white down lies
aggrieved by wind at dawn.

Toward

A certain rain gallops, head stooped,
from the cloudbeds of adulterers
or spills oak drops from a drum-tight sky.

My hair is ruched on your knee.
Another kind of love has come: and I would steep
in any forest new water calls through:

would believe our desire to be simpler than truth.
But we deduce the rules entire — always,
and so far.

Never and so near, to touch another
is breakage — is the absolute, naked —
is the fly by which the stuttered rose

erupts into prayer.
Hairless, your tight hand
sews the faith in mine.

Rain fallen is a measure
joy exceeds along this line.

Colleen Cotter

Scarlet Runner Beans

At the end of my driveway, a man I think I saw in DMV once
passes by with a wicker basket at the end of one arm and a snake
arcing 'round his neck, his human silhouette an altered proposition

Across the street, a browned and bearded homeless guy walks easily
in the other direction and expels with every fourth step
the foghorn tones of a blind ship wanting safe passage

Around the corner, a woman in a black-banded straw hat leans into a car,
her four-year-old daughter, pretty in floral, huffs out of the car seat and
brushes past me and her mother's high-tooled voice,
a Batman mask pushed high on her head

A blue pickup truck filled to the roof with Crayola-colored balloons
grumps up the Eunice Street incline, the first of two
balloon-filled vehicles I will see today, this sunny Berkeley Sunday

High on Euclid Avenue, I stand in a well-appointed kitchen and
chew a meaty scarlet runner bean, the porterhouse of beans, I hear,
available at two distinct locales deep in Oakland and up in Rockridge,
heady with the fumes of balsamic vinegar and automotive expressionism

The cook feeds me an olive-oil-slicked bean on a fork, feeds his wife,
feeds himself,
adds fresh tarragon and feeds us all again
adds fresh garlic, its bite curling and striking the air,
tries fresh lemon at my suggestion, then a fancy, nutty lettuce leaf

Each time the fork approaches my bird mouth
I open wide, close my eyes, chew with discrimination, and swallow
without thinking
the taste, eidetic, staying with me a second longer

The Bernoulli Effect

Pressure in rapidly moving air is low so articulators come together.

Time zones condense like an expired accordion
so two travelers can find the same point and fumble open
in the lurch of the iron horse.
Arms and body arc through Amsterdam;
the head sleeps somewhere over the Atlantic.

Once that happens, pressure builds up and forces them apart.

My nose presses against the glass
of your life, you say.
Your movements are frications, a buzz
on my clarity, I don't say.
I take off for the northern hills,
breathe the fresh air of abstraction,
find geometry in the pines and the stars.
You tamp down the earth,
prod a mollusk, pole your slow canoe
in dark places.

The process repeats, and you have sound.

A piano teacher once said you don't know a piece
with its recessed, blotted interiors
until you can hum each part, each strand
plying its physics.
See how we ride the easy grooves of melody
and hold the reins on inner voices,
while the song we sing together
scores its own atonal shadows, playing off
what's greater than the sum of its science.

[for Professors John Ohala and A. DeWayne Wee]

Dina Dahbany-Miraglia

Al-Gumr

ya gumri, ya gamr
samireh samehe
wi nijum xadamiheh

ya gumri, ya gamr, ya bahiyeh
safireh bahre samehe
lil hadj fadhet ash-shamseh

ya gumri, ya gamr, ya bahiyeh
safireh bahre samehe
lijararat ash-shamseh

Moon

(traditional Yemenite Jewish women's verses)

Selene, perfect, lady moon,
holds court in her heavens
her servants the stars

my verse

Oh, radiant most perfect moon
sailing the seas of her heavens
into the sun's embrace

my verse

Most perfect, radiant moon
sailing the seas of heaven
into the arms of the sun

[Comments: *ash-shamsa(t)* is feminine gender, *al-gumr* is masculine. In pre-Islamic Arabia, the sun was a goddess and the moon a god. The male god religions have kept grammatical gender, but, as you can see, both have been re-sexed.]

Frag

The sadness of jealousy

Of knowing, not knowing,

Of others s/he has known

Before you….

And still knows

Refuse to Change

Dropped … in sly, slime-handled smiles

That grasp, then hide the promise—

And promising lies, mocking

Honesty.

"History is lies."

No.

"History is myth."

Mythologized lies,—

Person-ified.

Early Summer

Breathing slowed

Time & mind & senses

All keyed to the

Unrhythmic flow,

The step & go

Of thrumming leaves & moving air.

Before Title IX

August 1951

Flying down
Ruhama Street
sweeping space
into no-time

November 1952

Small, muscled, blond
gym teacher, once
a track star.

"Will you teach me?"

Her eyes scanned my body,
weighed the mesomorph's
muscles and bones.

A long time later
"No."

She walked away.

June 1953

The tennis racquet
fit my palms.

Back swing, front swing.
Ambidextrous.

Bammed the balls
right where I aimed,
1/2 way 'cross the
emptied gym.

First time. Last time.

July 21, 1972

Title IX goes into effect.

Mirjana Dedaić

A House

There was a house
whose roof grew out of the ground
on petals of yellow and blue flowers
and tiny leaves of grass.

A man and a woman lived there
except during the nights
when they were dead.

One day
the man went to mow the lawn
but the chimney was broken
and soot was spread all over the meadow.

The woman looked at him
through the window
as she stood on her head.

The man stood a while,
pensive and dark,
then reached above his head
grabbed the moon
and cleaned the meadow.

The woman sat back on her chair
and decided to cook a wonderful meal.

A Kiss Is Just a Hiss
for Dan and our microwave

Every time they kissed,
Some house appliance would go berserk.

One time, a microwave oven,
Brand Bosch, imported from Germany
Suddenly began talking Swedish
And in the most passionate moment
Its little electronic heart burned out.

Another time,
The refrigerator,
Brand Iskra Kranj from Slovenia,
Turned into a dishwasher
And washed thoroughly
All the pickle jars and Tupperware
Carefully stored in it
Singing an Italian opera in the rhythm
Of the pots and pans cycle.

And just yesterday
Their faithful toaster
Decided to knit a sweater
And cocoon in it forever.

That was the decisive moment
When they realized
The only life for them was nomadic
Full of free kisses on a wet land.
The dryer,
Brand Zanussi,
Who for months pretended to be broken,
Agreed to turn into a horse
With fire in its wings
And vapor in its reeking breath.

Beer

A woman entered a beer bubble.
Although spacious, it was hard to sit still,
And she was uncomfortable.

So she got a pillow
Made from a small cloud
And she slept.

A man took the beer glass
and brought it to his mouth.

When he saw the bubble
with the beautiful woman sleeping in it,
he whispered: be mine,
and I'll keep you in a bubble bath.

And the woman replied:
No, she said,
I want to become your kiss.

Maslina

U lišće se

ulijeva

Zeleno ulje

sumraka.

Olive Tree

Thick dark green

oil

of the evening dusk

seeps

into the leaves.

Dance

Pelee and Kokopele are sliding over the floor
the rhythmic music streams through their heads
she with her red suede shoes
he with his long limbs and thin fingers
embracing her naked back

I will go tonight to visit that lady in blue,
he says,
she is lonely
her bones are cold,
her heart is a well of tiny explosions
like a tire right under your seat

I will burn her body to nothing
she'll melt like a marshmallow
spread all over my fingers, my nails, my kisses

her fruit will be yours, my lady
Pelee smiles, content, beautiful in red
hot and hungry

she whispers
her lust flames

but please, says Kokopele, after you dine
don't spit lava into my eyes

Vještica

Ja sam mačka šepurava
Na krovu mjesečine
Britko hladna kao metal noža

Od vještica imam jače čine
Pravila od svakog zla stroža
I pandže prozirno fine

Ja sam sto vragova arija
Od sunca sam, od neba starija

Opeci se, gori mi koža
Tvoj grijeh sam,
Nisam Marija.

Witch

I am a prrrrrrroud cat
On a moon roof
Sharply cold like a knife

My magic is stronger than any witch
My rules are stricter than evil's ditch
My claws translucently splendiferous
And cutting like life

I am an aria
Sung by a devils choir
I am older than the Sun
Older than the sky

Burn your finger on my hot skin
I am real, and airy
I am not Mary —
I am your sin.

Zagonetna Zemlja

Priča kaže da se do zagonetne zemlje
Stiže samo preko sedam gora i sedam mora.

Vrtim globus želeći saznati točno
kako se zovu te gore
i koje su boje mora koja treba prijeći.

Globus vrtoglavo izmiče —
geografska li je odrednica
ili svemirska?

Gore se zovu — ljudi i mjesta,
a more je boje vremena.

Mysterious Land

The story says you can reach the mysterious land
by crossing seven mountains and seven seas.

I spin my globe trying to find
the names of those mountains,
the color of those seas.

The mountains are named:
people and places.
The sea has the color of time.

Paul Friedrich

Catalysis

Dunes, and the Monarch butterflies on the sand,
are mute, listening,
wait to be transformed by the rattle of a three-year locust.

What does the field of wheat, brown-yellow in the August sunset
ache, yearn to whisper
until a scarlet tanager settles on a post tip?

What is the moonpath across a muskrat's wake
or a loon's cry
but the lake's catalysis?

Poem of Life

thrust
of a green needle
through soil
and by morning
tips
without number
breathe
a soft wave
a viridescent gauze
like the vague pallor
of first snowflakes
fallen in an autumn field

young stalks
twist sunwards
topped
by tissues of lime green
the leaves' tonguelets
that half conceal
the lust
to grow:
beneath the maiden's gown
her body's
torque

greens
of the husks
darken like evening
their wombs hold points
pale, soft
hardening to rows
of kernels, purple, gold
erect each on its necklet
with molar top
a congealing of the sun:
embryo, embryo
your bones!

crisp
at last
saturated
with pure dust
the tassel and silk
like down above the parted lips
of a lad or a senile man
surmount, in fall
the golden teeth
ranked in each cob
the leaves' parabolas that arch
from their fluted stalk:
the whole

A child names fall flowers:
"Flowers more beautiful than roses."
A boy on a farm names all the birds:
Orioles, bluebirds, rose-breasted grossbeaks....

The same boy, now man, but still a boy,
Sees a flight of bluebirds cross a pond.
"Do you have Eastern Bluebirds here?"
His friend says, "Yes, come look at the fish."
Red and white. Small carp? Big goldfish? Swarming.
"They are *koy*. They come from Japan. They
Heard us talking. They think we'll feed them."

Flashback to a vision of early trees:
The foothills of the prehistoric Caucasus,
The clear, crystalline, transparent air,
The oaks, the giant poplars, the silver birch.
Trees to be named, names to be chanted
Like names of birds and flowers,
A catalogue, a frame,
An intoxication of names in nature.

Imagine Linnaeus naming all the flora!
Or Adam apportioning our primal names in primal language!
Before there was any knowing of names or saying them again,
Before there was for us, long eons after,
The identification of the Eastern Bluebird
To enfold and repossess and so renew
In one small act of re-creation.

The Sandhill Crane

"The Sandhill Crane is one of the oldest birds on our planet."

Thomas de Boor

Out of a past two million years ago
out of a past long long before our past
before our earliest man in Africa
from Minnesota, Michigan, Wisconsin
they come on winging down on autumn winds
in thousands, yes, in all their thousands
to converge near one green Indiana marsh
to forage far for waste grain by the day
to suck new power from these fields of corn
then congregate, gregarious armada
of sixteen thousand in the setting sun
homing in by twos and twenties and yet more
to spend their autumn nights with browsing deer
and then in late November, onwards south
to Georgia, Texas, Florida, Louisiana
their thin bodies extended when in flight
as you hear their gentle, chirping call
"from red-marked heads on slender necks"
and they'll know where and when to go
after the next two thousand years
after our final man
or woman or a child
has seen its dawn of death.

A Russian Asymmetry

the lily, the poppy and the red, red rose
wax, like this girl
within the softness of their stems
she gathers mushrooms of amber
and fills dark forests with her beams of song

filaments of flax she cards and spins
in wind-swept winter
to amass with her artistry
a milk-white web in its oaken chest
the clothes of her dowry, and rubles red

a balalaika in sun-soaked harvests
in her dancing
as the chorus uplifts her
she sways with each courtship, springs
into first liaisons with the fall of night

will her groom be divined in water–
an omen told?
or a slipknot tied by a matchmaker
who'll test her speech and tweak her thighs?

the women know …
into the sauna
go mothers with daughters
to steam together in streams of sweat
and she must too with her braids on her breast

into the world of the earthenware stove
the peasant sauna
go the bride and the groom
for the "red princess" must plunge in the snow
through cold reborn and her young man's doom

skyblue eyes and flaxen hair
but whose?
who plucks her hence?
whose horsewhip lashes lightly when
she bends to unlace and jerk at his boot?

the wedding whirlpool sucks
the girl
to a yard and its hut
for his mother and sisters to sneer
at the "unknown one" who rakes and cards: the impure

but at high noon hayseed and sweat
make wild honey
and, drunk with the taste of it
"daughter" and "father" by a wedding rite
will thirst in their thighs and thrust, and thrust
under grasstips hid of the Cossack steppe

Taráscan Country

the sun squints over a ridge and squash tendrils explore an adobe wall
  like passing a stranger on an isolated road and suspecting his intentions
its rays hit the naked points of distant mountains
  like a lonely man surveying a far-reaching country
drying the dew and hoarfrost on the slopes
  the way antipathy congeals between a husband and a wife

the sky draws fine cirrus and nimbus strata over itself
  a film of ice, the first scab glazing a surface wound
and the tips of a gathering storm cloud blacken like the fruits of a cactus
  like gritty fingers touching the dusty butt of a pistol, lightly
after the thunder storm the newly ploughed soil breathes with fragrance
  like understanding the elegance in some words by a neighbor
and the borders of fields burst with the pinkness of rain-washed poppies
  like women in their embroidered blouses crowding into a patio

orchids hang still and moist from the cypresses and locusts
  as a girl awaits me, her lover, by "the eye of water"
a flock of dark thrushes soars up out of a ravine
  the way I will die in a room or whatever houses me
volcanic ash sifts between the supporting rootlets of the corn
  like inviting friends to a fiesta and receiving them in my courtyard

Taráscan Pots

1

she marvels at their glossy green:
brilliant moss in sun-flecked water

2

and wonders at their humanness of form
flat tops with covers–hats
over each orifice's flaring lips
the necks, concave and erect
the arm-like handles that arch
from both sides, then in past bulging shoulders
to the continuous, girded globes
of back, paunch, hips
that curve down
to squat bottoms
on which
three feet extended
tripod-like, they sit, solid, fat
yet with a Neolithic simplicity
they feel pregnant with pot-thoughts
expressed on the unseen faces of their red interiors

3

she ponders their designs crowded beneath the glaze

where "circles" are not rims of the moon
the "dots" raindrops, the "meanders" streams

nor the "deer" deer from the sierra
nor the "hills" volcanic sugarloaves to pierce the sky

nor are there "leaves of oak and laurel," nor species of "shell"
but "scallops" and hooked "scrolls" cut free from seas and woods

here what we call "deer, hill, leaf, snail, shell, dot, circle
and meander" are merely for the potter's squirrel-tail brush

design units in a world of style
that counterposes elegance against repletion

Б. Пастернаку

Марина Цветаева

Рас – стояние: версты, мили…
Нас рас – ставили, рас – садили,
Чтобы тихо себя вели
По двум разным концам земли.

Рас – стояние: версты, дали…
Нас расклеили, распаяли,
В две руки развели, распяв,
И не знали, что это – сплав

Вдохновений и сухожилий
Не расс*о*рили – рассор*и*ли,
Расслоили…
Стена да ров.
Расселили нас как орлов–

Заговорщиков: версты, дали…
Не расстроили – растеряли.
По трущобам земных широт
Рассовали нас как сирот.

Который уж, ну который – март?!
Разбили нас – как колоду карт!

24 марта 1925

To Boris Pasternak

Marina Tsvetaeva

Distance: leagues, miles....
They dispersed us, dis-lodged us
So we'd comport ourselves meekly
On disparate ends of the earth.

Distance: leagues, distances....
They decemented us, dissolved us,
Distended our arms, crucified us,
And did not know: this is an alloy

Of inspiration and sinew.
They didn't deharmonize but defiled.
They detached our strata...
in wall and ditch.
They dislocated us like eagles–

Like conspirators: leagues, distances....
They didn't destruct but discarded us, bit by bit.
Into the hovels of the earth's expanse
They debased us, like orphans.

What month? Well, now, which? March?
They divvied us like a pack of cards.

March 24, 1925

T. Givón

Marie in Love as the City Burns
(Algiers, May 1962)

All I know is what he told me.
Not that he's been all that forthcoming.
I prise them out of him
Bit by recalcitrant bit,
The jagged pieces of his dark puzzle.
Haphazard, here and there,
Between bouts of silence
And eons of absence.

Neither excusing nor explaining,
Forever on the prowl,
My very own reluctant errant knight.
Silent like a torched house,
Wary like an orphaned kitten,
Nimble like the crows on the road
At dawn
After a car bomb.

I don't pry, mind you,
Mostly, I am just there
Holding on to the brief morsels
Of our time together,
Trying to make sense.

I wait,
He is bound to let go
Sometime
When he just can't help it.
Then for a brief moment
His battlements are breached.

I swoop down then and grab
Prized nuggets of clarity,
A whiff here,
An echo there.
I scoop and sift,
Stir and rehash,
I brood over.

I've got time on my hands,
Gobs, hanging.
Again and again
I pick over the shards
Of his inadvertent confidences,
Fragile, random
Like our furtive love.

Still I know,
Because he tells me
Enough
So that the rest clicks into place,
My delicate tower
Of gossamer and guesswork
Propped on the scaffolds
Of his dark silence.

Faithfully, methodically
I fill in the blanks of his reluctant life.
He is mine to decipher,
Mine to indulge,
Mine to forgive and love
As the city burns.

Jorge Guitart

Indigo Apples

When the moon cut through the clutter
and seized us, I was a jerk in lots of
social interaction models–a vexing category.

Who will focus on a hostile takeover of the flesh
when everyone's grownup exterior
is....
Stop!

A face meaning macerated strawberries
with balsamic vinegar
is at nine o'clock.

I see the bulk of excuses
of those whose narratives
took no breaths.

The ever-shrinking interpreter
is elongated
and the beaver stops being wet.

Numb Month

Your throat is a royal treasure, grieving
the backbone of my carnation.

That is the mode of your incarnation.
Threads do little on promise.

The essence of bruising
is the lamb's avocation.

Waking, mechanistic,
my parrot flies to your hair.

I'm seen magnetizing a coconut–
its right hemisphere.

Make it mine, imitation lips.
And untrouble yourselves.

Blowtorch Catalogue

1

Call me if a huge lame duck
were to fidget with a cat translating an uncertain style

2

Which of the figurines would like to climb down from the uppermost terrace of the cake and speak directly to a family of sparks?

3

Me I am a voyant though not of the clair kind, now in the objective regions in order to maintain transduction.

4

Give no thanks to torturers for the same shoulders or the meat of clouds.

5

In emptiness of growing and then falling, perhaps this breath in the vast repetitions in a crude maze of velocity needs a predicate.

6

Can reverberations teach the congestion of fashion or are we in the brown eon?

7

The knockout bride made entirely of pewter.

8

A tiny cross on a chain around the neck relays the gown meant disdain.

9

If you are a crystal goose why the incitement?

10

That from these devices we take the terrible drop.

11

Still indigenous after contamination.

Still

It was the lack of a lack
because the station was moving
and the train was motionless
It was the lack of justification
in the empire of reason
in the summer of wintermint
the season of interment
and the mind being emptied
of false generalizations
and scabs and rooms to explore
rooms to deplore
a marble sky to implore
a sky married to another earth
and devotion was old and untrue
the time did not go back
and the bride was unkind
and the prince was of a type
unknown to children
we went to the temple of cold stares
and lit eyes that were lacking
in objective correlates
something unbearable was floating
and an ironclad horizon
but that is not all
it is the inclusiveness that is all

Why Don't You Write About Cuba?

No father figure's last question ends in 'yesteryear'. Better to sleep on something that is fated to be patio-like. It seems my plan will never obstruct a paradox. And I have to get up so no one quite remembers. About the comparison between ritual and test: just by gnawing I have been deferred. The breasts are away at church. I wouldn't know colossal guilt but I won't leave school the way I came. I didn't wake in the night to hear parenthetical screams. Perhaps it is the lack of something described as gaps.

No father figure obstructs the comparison between breasts and the way I came. And I have to know something about gnawing. I didn't wake to sleep on something deferred. Perhaps the test is a ritual so no one quite hears my plans. Leave the patio to screams.

Perhaps something is parenthetical and it is a colossal yesterday. Better to be described as a gap than to be at the ritual where paradox gnaws at guilt. Away at school I hear that I do not quite remember the lack of breasts in the patio.

I didn't wake so I wouldn't know. I lack a gap. Just by deferring gnawing I am not the test for something described parenthetically. I don't hear screams. No father that is not a test is not colossal. No church figure obstructs the way from school to breasts.

With Time to Complete the Attached Sheet

Mind lives in water and is divisible, an aggregate of sponges
with awe-inducing labels. When inner experiences have to do
with tubules, speaking is separate. Meanwhile the doorway

is reaching me. I am imagined walking alongside matter, pious and
durable. There is a local another in a somber cluster with coloration,
inventing a heart exhaust. Or someone barely excavated and stopped

for adversity purposes. But home early, among the orders of pre-afterlife,
this is a theory of helium plains with true intensities and also a theory of
flammable do's and don'ts, with no more than one alice in a jam with legs
retroflexed.

Marcia Haag

In Memory of a Young Niece

With my many baskets I'm sent to the garden:
A freeze tonight.
And although through my gauzy shirt
air passes warm—tender, even—
and the sky is as sweet a blue
as any sky of May;
and peppers hang heavily, tomatoes lazily,
leaves vulnerable and spread,
I have learned to heed these warnings.

And I pick them all,
the hidden and the glorious,
those better left unfound.
I take a moment to pity the new-opened flower
and confident buds, stretching to the soft afternoon,
certain they feel a sun-merged happiness
that transcends my blood-bound kind.

My hands pause over the juveniles:
Too beautiful in their impossible shine and symmetry,
they promise the best of all
if they could have but a week more of this gentle life.
And I am surprised at my grief
to leave them to the killing frost:
A ringing phone urges me away;
on this day there will be no remedy I can offer anywhere.

For Lise Menn and William Bright

Extending west, two perfect planes
curve to join their hemispheres and then,
an error, perhaps a mountain

My Love

My time now is spent
putting up with my love.
Once I petted it
serpentine but soft in its velvet-lined box,
but it grew larger
hungry and carnivorous;
only then did I learn ...

We thrash about in our double bed,
my love and I,
it so heavy now,
I slip inevitably into the depression
it leaves in this mattress,
or lie smashed against it,
one leg free but not both.

Mornings my eyes are deeply dented
where my love has thoughtlessly flung a paw;
I sometimes awaken to gut pain
to find its teeth among my entrails:
If I lie still it may think I'm already dead.

Other times I wake to its quiescence
slip away to find water, warm socks,
before my love,
light on its feet for such a ...
starts its pricking again.

The man who left me with this love
thought a little of me was enough.
And now my love will have at me
until it's had all it wants.

Clifford Hill

Krishna's lament

This
is the thousandth pass
through your body

Still
i have not
touched you

Though
each night
the dream's the same

Tonight,
radha,
leave the dream

I'll
wait in the blue temple
with the red sword

Sheathed

Jasmine Branch

for my sister Rosemary

The gold lights of Manhattan rise
and soon the jasmine branch plunges
in sulfur water of the childhood well
we crawled into for just five dollars
on a dare and there first smelt
the senseless odor of death
now hushed and violent
upon this city's summer air
to every overgrown child
migrated here from provincial
town in doomed hope
that memory's quick shame
and long haunt will darken
once for all these million
lights now shining
on that jasmine branch
I break again and thrust
into your drowning hand.

Ice Storm in Boston Public Gardens

Trees have turned metal:
Emblems
Of my own limbs
Bearing a weight
Of old love
Now wood and ice.

Still there's promise
Of spring thaw.
Bark cracks,
Crystal breaks:
A sudden laugh
Through leaf,
Branch, trunk,
The whole root of you.

Blessed girl

bless the horse
in the snow
let her ride him
to the town

bless the boy
waiting there
let them hold
let them kiss

take them home
let them bed
bless their love
bless their sleep

bless them god
bless them now

Bison Master

In Bialowieza I was the bison master,
wearing the uniform of state—badge,
braids and boots—appointed by the czar
to save remaining herds from certainty
of extinction. I served as forester as well,
tending newly planted birch on Popielno's
estate: I was to shield saplings from bite
and tear of tooth and hoof. These duties
served me well, yet in the season of red deer
rut and rage I found myself caught, as always,
between the doing of a thing and its undoing:
to breed the bison was to kill the birch.

With Jacques' help I devised a plan:
I'd plant myself near the red barn
on Polisawa's farm where he'd
first bred the black stripe back
into the innocent tarpan. Spreading
bales of hay hauled fresh from Bieloslav,
I'd lure the bison herd into the corral
where creamy heifers, gorged splendid
on the hay, are tethered near the old
blind bull. With a battered copper vat,
I'd build a fire to boil hornbeam root
and bark, assuring steamy acts of love
in those mountainous caves of hay.

There on the farm I dreamed you yet again:
this time your face at last your own—at least
it is the same hair falling across green eyes,
the same thin fingers pushing it back to fall
again. Near the manor door you stand:
white and slim as birch, you beckon me
to come. Thick as bison in fur coat and cap,
I heave my bulk toward the ancient manor.
You ask me to come in. I do and all is now
primeval forest as I the bison stampede oak
and cedar these long years dead from artificial
home in chair and couch. As old wood falls,
trees begin to grow and soon I'm watering
them with tears. You're an uprooted birch,
gracious lady of the manor, pouring blue

tea flowers from the samovar steaming
near the fire you kindle with sudden break
of branch out of trees now sheltering
as we drink loud and social while wolves
gather to watch at friendly windows.
We begin to dance and soon the wolves
are dancing too: now we're rising, you and I,
through the resin smoke of pine
up into the blackened rafters
out into the sky of falling snow.

Slowly we circle the Polisawa farm,
sleeping in its ring of spruce and poplar.
Mountains of steamy hay are heaving up
and down; the old blind bull bellows
in the wallow of heifer cows: everywhere
the scratch and break and burn of golden straw.
Bathed in the cold light of stars, those bisons
were innocent in their outrageous play, mere
hibernating moles tossed in a winter dream.
We drifted high above the familiar farm,
drinking hot blue tea from the samovar
and watching dancing wolves float by.
I could have dreamed that night forever.

Dell Hymes

For Jim and Trish

at the time of their marriage, 7 June 1997

Let every dig be rich in surprise,
Let every page be rife with surmise:

no house without garbage,
surprises too,

a Puritan goblet,
a Quaker kazoo—

an epitaph
that makes one laugh,

and one, in part,
worth taking to heart—

a teapot that perked,
a windmill that worked,

a pot still with leaves in,
a mill God believed in—

a wooden bird,
a tarnished cage,

a woven word,
a crumpled page—

skeletons, one or two,
adding life (and death) to what's old that's new,

to this art, this science, this recreation,
part measurement, part imagination—

found in earth, dug out in archives,
whatever whispers others' lives,

cracked, musty, fading at last,
whatever helps to paint the past—

that helps us share this ancient toast:
everything passes, not all is lost.

THAT'S WHAT WE WISH
FOR JIM AND TRISH.

SAMUEL JAY KEYSER

The Jogger

I have seen her in the Rue Jacob
turning toward the river, in Venice
along the Zattere sprinting to Salute,
and there was that time, in Alice Springs,
on top of Uluru, the monolith
aborigines call the center of the universe,
she was limned against the sky,
like a new moon risen.

This morning, a cafe in Harvard Square,
my table by a window frosted with steam,
I see her, arms pumping hard,
not a hair out of place. Our eyes meet.
She sprints toward the Commons.
She is wearing spandex, black, with orange stripes,
white Nikes with an electric blue swoosh,
a Red Sox cap on backwards.

I sip my tea, do a crossword, read my horoscope.
I have my running shoes.
I do not put them on.
I know what she wants.
I won't be hurried.

Conversation with an Angel

The night is crystalline,
the sky a shower of cracked light.
Each star is as pointed as an insult.
Bundled against the wind,
an angel waits beneath a lamp,
his voice a striking match.

Stars, he says, *are the eyes of God.*
When they disappear, God is blind.

I follow his bony finger upward.
Listen carefully, he says.
In the distance I hear thunder.
There are no clouds in the sky,
only a moon like an interrogator's lamp
and the diminishing stars.

The tap, tap, tap of God's cane, says the angel,
his finger nudging the side of his nose.

I give him a quarter.
He lets me go.

Summer Cottage on Gull Pond

Midnight by the lake, the children are asleep.
Summer is almost gone. Mr. Suleikis isn't home
again. Mrs. S. winds the gramophone,
dances naked on the screened in porch.
The music spreads like a birthmark
across the water. The breeze falls silent.
The trees leave off their rustle.

Mrs. S. traces figure eights with painted toes.
The gramophone runs down.
The tango comes to rest in comic drawl.
Mrs. S. walks to the lake, feels the waves lap
at her painted toes, her knees, her hips, her thighs
as she partners with the water.

A Child's Chore

William Barton Rogers, the first president of MIT, died while delivering the President's Address in 1881. His last words as he lay on the commencement platform were "bituminous coal."

Each winter month the coal truck
rumbled to a halt behind our house,
depositing, like some black beast,
its burden on the ground.

Twice each night I left the house,
flashlight in one hand, bucket in the other,
tracing the snow to where the coal was binned.
It was a witch's den. My eyes made rats
of shapes, my ears snakes of the wind.
Cursing loud, my shovel for a sword,
I filled the bucket to its protruding brim.

Safely back, I fed the hippo mawed Arcola that gobbled coal
the way Dante's Satan gobbled souls.
In the morning I cranked the ashes,
grinding spent coal into filthy dust,
took them out along the snow covered path for burial.

The insatiable stove is long since gone,
melted in a monger's yard,
turned to nails or someone's gate.
Its memory grows colder, yet when I die,
anthracite will be on my lips,
hard, clean, dustless anthracite.

Yo-Yo Ma 妖艶兒

김진우

Yo-Yo Ma (妖艶兒)
너는 나의 첼리스트
나는 너의 첼로

네가 나를 연주할 때
내게서 아름다운 선율이 흘러나오고
슬픈 가락도 카타르시스의 전주(前奏)

너의 연주(演奏) 없이
나는 침묵과 먼지와 주검의 악기일 뿐

나의 삶은
너의 숨결과 이어질 때 부활하고
너의 활이 내 허리를 스칠 때
　　내게서 무지개가 일어
　　내 온몸이 환희에 떨어

나의 웃음 나의 외침 나의 한숨은
오로지 너만이 자아낼 수 있는 음악
너 없이 내 존재는 무의미하고
너의 연주 없이
　　나는 말도 노래도 없는 벙어리
　　산귀신이 잃어버린 외쪽 나막신

너는 나의 요염아(妖艶兒)
너의 황홀한 자태에 도취된 채
나는 또 네가 날 연주해 줄 날 만을
기다리고 있으리

나는 너의 첼로
너는 나의 첼리스트
요염아 (Yo-Yo Ma)

1995년 11월 5일
Yo-Yo Ma의 연주를 보고

김진우 씨는
캘리포니아대학교 언어학과 교수이며, 고려대학교 언어학과 초빙 교수로 재직중이다.

*Yoyoma**, Enchanting one

Yoyoma, enchanting one,
You are my cellist,
I am your cello.

When you play me,
I sing joyous melodies;
Even a mournful tune is a prelude to catharsis.

Without your touching,
I am but an instrument of silence and death.

My life is revived
When linked to your breath.
Your bow stroking my waist
Creates a rainbow of sound,
And my body trembles in ecstasy.

My laughter, my sigh, and my roar
Are the music only you can generate.
Without your caresses
My being is meaningless;
I'm a mute with no word and no song,
A lone clog lost by a giant fairy.

You are my enchanting one.
I will wait until you play me again.
Enraptured with your beauteous form,

I am your cello,
You are my cellist,
Enchanting one, *Yoyoma.*

---

* A word-play on *Yo-Yo Ma*, the name of a noted cellist. *Yoyoma* means 'an enchanting child' in Korean. The original poem was written in Korean in 1996 after hearing Yo-Yo Ma play in Seoul while I was a visiting professor of linguistics in Korea University, Seoul, Korea.

Koenraad Kuiper

Behind the university hospital

I come upon the path to the shy past.
I ride past an old farm.
On one side a man with a gun on his arm
walks through dry leaves in the wood.
On the other a half moon
and dark clouds gleam in a ditch.

You must attend to it
they say.

On the way back
I ride towards the future.

Come home

and walk down the slight decline
of this familiar street.

See
the citrus blossom
has sweetened the air while
over the blue water and hills
a light haze hangs.

Plant words

and their mycelium
invades what is not
quite
alive.

Pick them
just
when
their spores
drop.

'Forget the velvet glove, Lavrushka',
said Stalin, emptying another glass by candle light
in the darkened room,
'my friend'.

In Ljubjanka people are woken again,
taken through door after door .
One clashes behind them;
another opens in front.

There is an old man in Moscow who remembers,
someone who wore a heavy rubber apron and gloves
who moved silently in behind
and fired into the back of the young men's heads.

After such work
a room must be washed; the apron washed.
Time still for a drink
to end the night shift.

Settle yourself below
the moon's corona in the early dark hours.
Tonight you will sleep heavily.
In a sweat you will dream without waking.

There is much to be done.

Adam Makkai

Cultured Dill

We tried to make dill pickles
(Hungarian style) with bread, water, salt,
and dill, cured by sunshine
in a glass jar.
We kept searching for fresh dill
in every market in Hong King
but there just wasn't any.

One Sunday afternoon in Stanley Market
we noticed an exuberant green plant
with tiny yellow flowers
in a pot in an expensive florist's shop.
It looked and smelled like dill.
I broke off a stem and bit into it:
"Dill!" I cried triumphantly—
"I have found the dill we need!"

The owner stared at me with
genuine consternation: "Crazy
Foreign Devil!" he said to his wife in Cantonese,
but she turned to me, smiling, and said in
impeccable English: "We do hope it will cure
whatever may ail you, Sir!"

Three pots of dill on my 18th floor balcony
overlooking the South China Sea
sing to us of Haydn, Kodály and Bartók
in Li Tai Po's
Confucian
characters.

Shoes

My squishy old shoe is my
wrinkled,
dusty and
changeable castle

Tree

Hugging the shadow
of January's icy breath
on the shores of Lake Michigan
the frozen black branches
of a lonely oak
suddenly give way
to a burst of sunlight
and a
smiling patch of blue

Grass

Never in my life
have I slept so soundly
as when at age twelve
after a hard day's mountain climb
I collapsed on a burlap sack
stuffed full of the most wonderfully smelling
freshly cut grass that hadn't yet wilted into hay

Flowers

A rose may be all sorts of things
Gertrude Stein is dated and that's good for the rest of us
this was because she thought she understood rosehood
nobody does and that's nice
What do carnations have to do
with incarnation and reincarnation?
As much or as little as your imagination
will permit
Orchids are the loveliest, but don't forget
plumerias and poinsettias
Try to get inside the mind of lavender
Lavender is best it mixes with all kinds
of liquids and even makes a
wonderful shaving lotion to say nothing
of how it will chase away the moths
Ah, the lavender! The lavender!
Kerchoo
kerchoo who created you?

Clouds

Homework done,
school and library behind me,
papers read, grades handed in,
letters sent, bills paid—well,
almost all of them—
if only this back ache would go away—
The Chinese osteopath recommends in broken English
more exercise—something I dread—
the chlorine in the heated pool
where I awkwardly flounder
among the other hydrotherapy patients
makes my skin break out in a rash—
How to counter the weight of the body,
the merciless drag of gravity?
How to float away? I peer out the window and see
the sun setting between the clouds over the South China Sea

Dictionary

All of my possible
feelings and thoughts
alphabetized forwards and backwards
leapfrogging merrily
from memory to paper to disk
and back into memory
and on onto all kinds
of official
or even
very private paper like this one

Language

When the Sylphs in the air
and the Undines in the water
and the Salamanders in the fire
and the Gnomes under the roots
of old trees start to dance
nobody is holding anyone hostage at gun point
there is no negotiation
no demands
no conditions
the conventions of grammar
simmer down
into syncopated notes
Mozart came close

Postage Stamps

A distant history
on a magic square centimeter
a climate
a country
an alphabet
somewhere
I have a friend
and he has thought
of me

Joseph Malone

rain in the pear trees
the grass smells sweet

(Untitled)

Climb the house-blocked knoll at night
above the sleeping shrubs
the haze of porches
looming yards
climb where tingling wind rolls down
the quiet walks
and calls
"go beyond the knoll-top
"know beyond the knoll-top,
"far below
"where the sea-run rivers lunge, bridges streak afire
"where top-flown towers plunge the sky …"
Good enough:
climb beyond the knoll-top
and down the winding walks
where houses linger
dark as blocks.

One late winter afternoon as I returned to Grandma O's house at 40 Temple Street and climbed the back porch to the coldroom and the orange glow of the kitchen just beyond, I climbed the outside steps of an old building on Union near Willow and followed Ronnie four flights up to her flat. No one was home and no lights were on, but cozy fires were glowing in a kerosene stove in the living room and a coal-burning stove in the kitchen. "How 'bout some hot chocolate, Joey?" I sat with anticipation at the old oilcloth-covered table and watched as Ronnie's silhouette danced the dance of a happy cook before the bluish flames leaping in response behind the grate of the stove. *Do you like me, Joey?* As I passed from the coldroom to the orange warmth of the kitchen, Janice smiled up from in front of the refrigerator where she crouched peering through the shelves of bottles and jars and covered dishes. "Hi, Joey! Want some Moxie?" For my inspection she held up and gently sloshed a dark liquid in a large bottle necklaced with three red rubber rings. Each boarder in Grandma O's house had a number to identify their foodstuffs in the common refrigerator and pantry. Janice's number was three. *Wanna see me bare, Joey?* Janice's number was three.

Recessional

Piebald and calico
the boxcars trundled past
the yellow-bowed trees
along the tumbly houses
around the sandy hill
where flags
and spindly clotheslines climbed
up
up
and the church bells
chimed.
And then the rumbling train
was gone;
but not the bells
and the pale yellow
of the sun.

De Arce Arborum

He dreamed he was swinging through the trees of Prospect Park like Tarzan. The trees were tall, as tall as the sky, and their crowns were intricate and endless, like a world.

Suddenly, he swung through to the outside. The sphere-shingle leaves glistened in the bright cool sun. And he thrilled to behold all of Brooklyn glazed in the afternoon beneath, tumbled and shining.

And holy. Steeples beyond the living rosary of the Belt Parkway. All men, all women, all girls, all boys: in the honest streets and open rooms and radiant yards; in the State of Grace, exhilarant and praiseful—he hoped and believed and almost knew.

He threw out his arms to Heaven. And arched through the sky to join them. Soul to soul. And, if God gave him, to touch the miracle of flesh.

Lise Menn

Disorderly Conduct: Air View

The rivers snake diagonally
Across the squares of Nebraska
They were there first, they and their hills,
Refusing gleefully
To pay any attention
To the New Order of the Ages.

Port Townsend, December

Gray fog hovers
a little above the rooftop;
gray smoke rises to join it.

Rome, October

Five thousand miles due east of you,
The back of my neck
Prickles at the thought of your kisses.

Senta's Warning

Nothing attracts a woman like a man in pain.
Once more into the breach! We fools
Will try to heal all wounds, even
The bloody jagged toothmarks of the soul
That gnaws itself —
That gnaws itself and any hand that feeds it.

Ah, those brilliant men, wolves of the heart!
Proud and vain, judging themselves as failures,
Priding themselves on this keen judgement, so
Scorning us who love them as the greater fools
The more we try to prove it.

Impossible to heal them.
Admit it; cut your losses. Leave!
The Hollander—I gave him peace, but only peace in death.
These are alive, their anguish festers,
They consume themselves and us,
And are consumed not. The burning bush
Bears never leaf nor flower, never fruit.

If you must prove your power by healing, find a man
Whose wounds were made by others' hands, not by his own.
Perhaps, perhaps you can bring healing.
But maybe not, proud sister. Maybe not.

Bird

Warm, soft, quiet,
filling my hand,
the small bird taken from the cat at sundown.

Unresponsive, staring, but alive,
no sticky blood or loosened feathers.
I set it on a still-warm stone;
it tumbled off,
stiff as a shuttlecock.

Naturalist

I write my poems like I write my papers
Close to the data, taking their constraints
Not from a prophet's unifying vision
But from the ebb and flow of what is seen
Tasted, heard, and felt beneath skin-thin
Murky or translucent surfaces.
Not that I haven't heard
The trumpet's call to all-embracing Faith
High-ringing from the watchtower noon and night,
Not that I haven't found my way sticky,
Slogging down embankments, trying to get close
To where sap, water, blood, thought, speech, and passion
Bubble and flow, weed-choked or free.
But here I choose to root and make my notes,
Toes in the mud; the sunlight here
Is clouded or leaf-dappled, but the trails are clear.

Marilyn Merritt

Third Day's Morning on a Trek out of Pokhara

—below the Annapurna range Nepal, October

Out of Ghandruk en route to Biranthante
we hike down the steep slate steps
to the rushing glacier melted river that
roars along with a chorus of crickets.
The path grows narrow,
cobbled, run with water and leach filled weeds.
Waist high
fly pairs of plump yellow butterflies
with black rims, and blue-winged dragonflies.
Now these, one or two electric-green
grasshoppers, and huge and tiny
tiger striped moths give
chase
across the riced and flowered meadow.

Resonance

You have been there, I'm sure,
though probably long ago when
you were small
and lay not thinking on the
prickles of the summer cut grass
simply smelling the sun on the
snipped off cuttings and
the scent of the border petunias.

When I was there, the petunias
were pink, a kind of pulsing
vibrant pink, that goes
almost violet
iridescent fuchsia
as the light goes soft
with the dusk.

Come there now with me
again.

Back Home Mid September

Today rain comes on a Tuesday
and it runs in small rivulets
spreads an eighth inch gloss
over the weathered back deck

all its wet wooden surfaces
Droplets bounce off the marble table top too
their movement flashing
little points of brightness in the sheen

The chrysanthemums are in bud
tall spires of the asters bowed
with heavy pink blossoms
Mulberry leaves are half yellowed and
some lie soggy round the tree

A full moon wanes
in the pale morning sky
The warmth of summer
only lingers
like an afterglow.

DIPIKA MUKHERJEE

Generations

Protima (The Goddess)
The Goddess astride a lion
spear-tip dug into the bleeding heart of dying *mahisasur*
is power incarnate
creation-destruction in female form.
The drum-beats rise above murmured mantras
Incantations spiral,
like incense smoke mixed with coconut husks,
fog up towards the heavens;
the idol takes on life for five days a year,
awakened by the drums
the chants, prayers, a dancer's trance;
Five days, the mother-preserver,
flowers at her feet,
stands among human children.

Ya devi sharbabhuteshu shaktirupena shanghastita
namastatye, namastatye, namastatye, namoh, namah.
(O Goddess who are in every form the incarnation of strength
I bow to you, I bow to you, I bow to you, I bow to you)

Boroma (Great-grandmother)
You were of harlot beauty, eight years young
When old men searching youth's choicest blossoms
Crossed the cold marble halls; your father's house
was all abuzz, the frenzied flies mimicked
flurried servants laden with fragrant foods
dripping with ghee, saffron, pistachio, milk,
And you were the Sweet. You flinched, in shyness
when the old man, searching for his son's bride,
tilted your chin to peer into the flame
of your dark child-eyes and drowned; taking you,
thus was your youth wed to an old-aged lust
A brahmin's will made you the third, child-wife.

You spent many nights tracing mango leaves,
the ephemeral patterns on a moonlit ceiling;
at fifteen fled your bed of want
tumbling from the window a burgeoning bud,
then fell, three stories down.
Your sari undraped, you fled your shackles
Swam the woman-river flowing from
heaven; the Ganges took you to your home.

He came for you; this time your eyes afire
You quietened the marble halls, the chill walls
resounded with the silence of your anger.
They called you evil, you had defied your Lord.
Yet you had the madness of life,
annihilating to create
and from the ashes of the child-bride rose
A new relationship; then you went back,
your poet-husband created art in
your tribute, immortalized your strength
in faded pages of an ancient book
treasured by my Dadu, your grandson.

Thakuma (Paternal Grandmother)
Gold anklets are sacrilegious; so your
infant feet tinkled silver. You were a
cherished child, only daughter, coddled and
cocooned you grew to womanhood, knowing
your worth in gold. Then shenai strains mingled
with fragrant sandalwood and rosewater
and you shimmered in red brocade, your face
glinting with jewels, bracelets on glistening
arms. As you circled the sacred fire
seven times, your father muttered ancient
mantras, giving the gift of a virgin.

Warring nations forced you to flee the land
of your birth. You lost your husband in an
alien land, looked at seven infant mouths
and willed yourself to live. Widowed you were
shorn of hair, arms bracelet bare, vermillion scraped
your color pale-white as your widowhood.
Those were desperate years. You lost a child
to illness; another, seeking heat on
a chill night, crawled into the open fire.
You sifted through the ashes of burnt hopes
and survived; like rice replanted in
alien fields, you gave your children a place
to grow, creating life out of chaos.
Your fourthborn became my father.

Prarthana (A prayer)
I am restless, twenty-six years heavy
with the burden of things
undone,
unsaid,
unpublished,
unwon.

Yet I am no phoenix to burn, burn, burn
into a glorious flame of creation
let that cup pass
I want rebirth without trauma,
life without destruction.

Ya devi sharbabhuteshu shaktirupena shanghastita
namastatye, namastatye, namastatye, namoh, namah.

Donna Jo Napoli

French

—Hey, Mamma, do you know what *blanchet* means?
—Sounds French.
—Do you know French?
—Some.
—It means 'pretty'.
—Nuh uh. I know the word for 'pretty'.
—It means 'garbage'.
—Stop making things up, Robert.
—It means 'garbage'. I know it. I'm sure of it. I speak French.
She goes to the shelf, picks up the dictionary.
He pinches his lips, wiggles them around.
She flips the pages, worries he'll never stop lying.
He pulls on his sleeve, knows he's caught.
She reads, smiles.
He stares.
She's still smiling.
—It means 'garbage', right? Wow! It means 'garbage'. I told you. Ha!
—Nuh uh. Much better, Robert, much much better.
—Really?
—Really.
—What's it mean?
—A swanskin used for straining.
—A what? A swan? Like a bird?
—You got it.
—Wow. That's French.
—Yup, that's French.

Dry Thoughts During a Chairs' Meeting

1.

Grades go up
Shouts go up
Inflation conflagration the decline of civilization

I look across the 8
faces in the seminar
and wonder what 10% can get an A.

Conundrum bullundrum
dumdittydumdumdrum

I give up.

2. Eliot and Watson

Everybody's pretty much the same.
You think so?
No, I just said it.
Birth, copulation, and death.
If the poet was right,
if the biologist was right,
then amoebas differ more
than humans.
Everybody is pretty much the same.
No no no.

3.

I know a man
whose grandson killed his daughter.
He walks around
as though he still has legs.

He answers questions.

And here am I,
no legs arms head
when all I've lost
is you.

4.

I didn't think
flesh on bones
would hang so dear.
Now I know
drop dead
means that.

You see

It's a ping pong game and you bring a paddle
and a ball a ping pong ball and I bring
two hands. You call foul point a finger
but no one does the finger better than me.
I catch your ball roll it in and out my
fingers your ping pong ball that is small and
smooth and dentable in my hands squeezable.
Slam you go damn you go you could wring my
neck and for what I ask wide and wet eyed.
I didn't do it to break the rules your rules.
I did it cause you see I have no paddle.

Life

moments arrange life pinned to a bulletin board
my first holy communion white lace round
almost a halo pearls I touched light fake
count it list it know this matters now
those glasses pink and blue through which I saw
the lines down leaves the hairs around my mother's
mouth the cars speeding toward me thank god
falling in love in a drivein wanting everything
fearing as much watching my father leave
shoes empty one long year telling that god
damned Irish priest the infallibility
was beyond me even for a pope no way
count them yes and list them know them yes
divinity in a scholarship with teak stairs
hot meals heavy white cream on Cheerios
and my husband at long last a milestone the milestone
count each and every one blessèd each and every one
and oh the babies' words secrets revealed
eyes of intelligence lips of kisses
songs and whispers orgasms and tears
moments count pins on a bulletin board
but how to discern endings except in retrospect
that last one almost got by without celebration
almost got by with a grudge lack of recognition
so thank you for the second chance thanks
I push the pin into the board and count it yes.

Emily and i wrote e-mails
almost every day
then every few days
till she moved into the hospice
where she had no computer
just birdfeeders outside every window
she said i had to come and watch the birds with her
soon
she had a rhizotomy that day
they injected alcohol to deaden the nerves in her chest
it was supposed to help with the pain
but when i telephoned her, so far it had only left her
feeling battered and bruised
she talked like that, plain words from a poet
she never cried to me
even when i lay down on the hospital bed beside her a week before that
when i said, i've come to scream with you
she just said, aaaah
and looked at the ceiling
i never did make it to the hospice
Boston is far away
and she was there so briefly

YOLANDA RIVERA-CASTILLO

I Love Aruba

This is a long poem underwater,
the sound of a thousand horns in my city,
in the new very mine city
where people watch with every eye
and every corner of their senses,
looking for the broken windows
where my very new city
will shine...
I do not feel myself here
dreaming of the Aruba nights
when I slept in the sea
breathless like an ancient woman
who lied dreaming of the new city
where I am about to die...
Care for my dreamy arms
who try mastering the arts of the strokes
for a foreign Puerto Rican
they met many years ago underwater...
This is my letter of resignation
from the love I never had and the tricky smiles
that swept my skin when the wine was abundant
and the happiness evident...
I watch the sea hesitate eternally,
telling me that he does not want to tell,
building a beach for his future
under my feet,
and I wish the air and not the water,
and I wish I could breathe
every corner of your desires
and keep them somewhere in my psyche.
An underwater poem has already disappeared
walking the streets of Aruba
with a shell over my ear.

Dan I. Slobin

to right the writing

waiting for a word to drop
as easily as the ink flows from the pen

waiting for the words to clump into clauses
as easily as the ink dries on the page

dried ink is sometimes only dried ink

Fiat Lux

Somewhere it's always dark:
and even when the sun comes
it can't help but make shadows.

Somewhere it's always light:
every shadow is an affirmation of the sun
and darkness is only an echo of the light.

Even at night, flesh and leaves hold the sun.

Verbs of Motion

Rolling wheels cover every inch of the way.
Walking feet leave spaces between every step—
But the feet know the path.

It is easier to ride to work—
but you can't see the bees in the blossoms.

Even while sitting, one can go to the ends of the earth.

Written Lines

(on completing the writing of a long book; with apologies to Rilke)

The book.
Where do they go—the lines, once written?
For whom?
Expunged from the mind's word-shop.
Checked.
Cherished.
Set aside on paper.
Waiting.

> My book-obsessed friend
> has calculated
> that if he reads a book a day,
> he can read 18,000 books.

Is this your goal—written words:
to become invisible, *in us?*
O, words: *invisible!*

O, changes—unknown changes.
Even *I* can discover new ideas in my words,
meeting them again, after an absence.

Where will they go, then,
in you, reader?

ANDREW SUNSHINE

Poem (Pulled Word by Word Out of a Hat)

Not by magic, unless what chance conjures
be called magic, but by mere happenstance:
Reaching toward the crown my hand ignores
all slips save the one destined in advance,
draws it out, then back to the hat to pluck
the next word from the nest without regard
to sense or the lack thereof. Let dumb luck
in a blindfold pick a card any card
—the laws of accidence will let it find
what it needs and also define the course
of reading ciphers for the reader's mind.
I, if armed with that hidden force
which divides the sapphire from the gneiss,
could write paradise with a pair of dice.

Versus

The yes in his eyes

meets

the no in her nose.

Eugenics

Your wife bears you

an uncanny resemblance.

A Code in My Nose

I never wanted to be a tycoon
with an alarm system for my pantry
nor have I been devoted to *tikkun*
olam. In this damned life it's *panta rhei*,
so I went with the flow's collision course
seeking the sweet seed of sacred, ancient
sense in a nutshell's volume, a crash course
in what makes this bomb tick. No secret agent,
still even I have screwed up my courage
not to take on Greek and stout Ulysses
but the Big One: what is the world made for?
By such sure methods, I've screwed up my life,
but drayhorse-like stay my course: uselessly.
The word to start with was the word made fur.

Deborah Tannen

Lilies

Eagerly
we awaited lilies.

First green ribbons of leaves poked up,
then stalks broke through the leaves
huddled at the center.

Dreamily
I watch a young buck
nibbling grasses behind the house.
Beautiful, this large warm beast
so close, so still.

But the lilies!
Delicately
the deer nipped off
each sweet bud.

How dignified, how straight
stand the headless lily stalks.

Old Post Cards

My father re-uses already-sent post cards,
squeezing new red lines
into the spaces
between old blue ones.
Line by line,
I get the message.

That's how it feels to write
when there's someone in the house.

Duet at the Pier, City Island, The Bronx

A pair of swans
glide in to the harbor.
Together their necks bend in,
stretch out.
Nibbling the water's surface
they mirror each other.

Two workers
approach the pier
a plank on their shoulders,
a man at each end
down, down the ramp to the pier.

The swans explore
the shore's rocks,
the wooden pier …
Ah, men.

One swan ignores them,
floats away.
One worker keeps hammering,
banging out a water-blackened plank.

But one man crouches
at the pier's edge
where one swan stayed.
White-feathered swan
red-shirted man
peer eye to eye.

Michael in His Absence

At my desk
facing papers
feeling businesslike
I find
a tiny curl
of bright red hair.
Who would have thought a hair
could be so red
so coiled?

You creep in between sheets
of paper
as you've crept into the folds
of my days
my nights.

In the sink
against white porcelain
another tiny spiral:
the smallest fragment of you.

I sit down to eat.
A single redbrown curl
appears on my plate.
Absent, you are everywhere.

If you died,
a tiny curled red hair
would be unbearable.

Scratch Paper

In the Westchester apartment
my parents have abandoned
my sister and I arrive
to complete their packing.

In every room we find
a neat stack of scratch paper
homemade from scrap paper
torn into thirds:
green, yellow, blue, white.

In my father's desk
they have a cubbyhole
just the right size to hold them.

In the kitchen
they cling to the side of a cabinet,
clamped in a magnetic clip,
pencil dangling from a string.

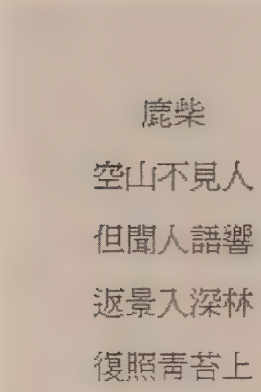
In the bedroom
they sleep in a plastic cradle
nailed to the wall
on my father's side of the bed.

As the day ages,
one task remains.
We close the door to the apartment,
take the elevator to the lowest floor.
Walking along a row of small doors
we find the storeroom with their number.
Amid the cartons
beside an old space heater
on the edge of a wooden shelf
a stack of torn-edged paper
and expectant pencil
await my father's thoughts.

MARIANNA TOCE GERSTEIN

Cuisinart

carmelized eyes
that crackle on ice
gnocchi nose
sprinkled with spice
copper cappellini
spill down by the potful
thin phyllo skin
ever so difficult
steel tong jaws
tearing and gnashing
milk white teeth
sharp as eggshell hatching
radicchio tongue
dipped in warm chutney
saffron thread lashes
blink tears into honey
fragrance of anisette
frolics and lingers
marzipan heart
will kiss all her fingers



Deer Park

Wang Wei

Dedicated to Paul Friedrich

In empty mountains–
Void of people, yet
Voices echo, murmur–

Chiaroscuro shadows of evening
Slip through sylvan skylight,
Their gleam again ascending threads
Of dusky moss—

Notes on the Contributors

A linguist specializing in semantics and mathematical linguistics, **Emmon Bach** is Professor Emeritus of Linguistics at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. He served as President of the Linguistic Society of America in 1994. Emmon has worked extensively on Haisla in Kitimat and has helped to develop Haisla language courses and teaching materials. He has co-taught Haisla courses offered under the auspices of the University of Northern British Columbia.

Zhiming Bao was born and raised in Shanghai, China, and educated in China, Canada, and the United States. In 1990 he obtained his doctorate in linguistics from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. In 1993 he moved to Singapore. Currently he is an Associate Professor in the Department of English Language and Literature, National University of Singapore.

Judith Bishop has published poetry in *Verse, Quarterly West, The Iowa Review, Oxford Poetry,* and *The Oxford Book of Modern Australian Verse* (ed. Peter Porter). She wrote her doctoral dissertation on the intonation of an Australian language at the University of Melbourne, Australia.

Colleen Cotter is a lecturer in linguistics at Queen Mary, University of London. As a sociolinguist, her primary research areas include media language, the ethnography of communication, endangered languages (Modern Irish), and the social and performative dimensions of communication.

Dina Dahbany-Miraglia earned her Ph.D. in Anthropology at Columbia University in 1983 and is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Speech Communication & Theater Arts at Queensborough Community College/C.U.N.Y. Her research focuses especially on Semitic Linguistics, Judeo-Yemeni in all genres.

Mirjana Dedaić wrote her first poem at the age of nine and had her first poetry reading at 16. She has lived in Croatia, the United States, and Germany, and writes in English and Croatian. She is a sociolinguist, and her most recent book is *At War with Words* (Mouton de Gruyter, 2003).

Paul Friedrich is professor emeritus (active) in anthropology and linguistics and serves in the Committee on Social Thought at the University of Chicago. He was educated at Williams College, Harvard University, and Yale University, and has done five years of fieldwork among the Taráscan Indians of Mexico, the Nayars of South India, and

Russian dissidents. His works include *Agrarian Revolt in a Mexican Village*, *The Taráscan Suffixes of Locative Space*, *Proto-Indo-European Syntax*, *Proto-Indo-European Trees*, and, most recently, *Music in Russian Poetry*. He is also author of *Bastard Moons* and two other volumes of poetry. His current teaching focuses on comparative poetics and politics.

T. Givón is professor emeritus of linguistics and cognitive science at the University of Oregon. He lives on a ranch near Ignacio, Colorado.

Originally from Cuba, **Jorge Guitart** teaches Spanish linguistics at the State University of New York at Buffalo. He is widely published in Spanish phonology and Caribbean Spanish dialectology, and is the author of *Foreigner's Notebook* (1993), a book of poems, and *Film Blanc,* a chapbook (1996). His poetry has appeared in *Exquisite Corpse, Tin Fish,* and *Chain,* and is represented at the Electronic Poetry Center at the State University of New York at Buffalo. He has contributed to all previous anthologies of poetry by linguists co-edited by Donna Jo Napoli. He is also represented in the anthologies *Cuban American Writers* (1989), *Currents from the Dancing River: Literature by US. Latinos* (1994) and *Little Havana Blues* (1996).

Marcia Haag is an Assistant Professor of Linguistics at the University of Oklahoma. She was born in Vermont, but was reared in the West, in the California Mojave desert, rural Colorado, and Arizona. Her professional work centers on Native American languages, particularly Choctaw and Cherokee. She is married and has two children.

Clifford Hill is the Arthur I. Gates Professor of Language and Education Emeritus at Teachers College, Columbia University. For many years he directed the Program in African Languages at the Institute of African Studies in the School of International and Public Affairs. Clifford is the author of *Children and Reading Tests* and *From Testing to Assessment: English as an International Language* and other works concerned with language and literacy assessment. His sociolinguistic research on African languages and cultures has led to publications in such fields as oral culture, literacy studies, multilingualism, and bilingual education. In particular, he has published widely on ways in which resources of oral culture can be used in language and literacy development. His psycholinguistic research on language, space, and time has been published in academic journals and books not only in English but also in other languages. He has also published poetry and literary stylistics. Clifford has served widely as a consultant to language and literacy programs in many parts of the world, especially in Africa and Asia. In recent years, he has concentrated on

developing programs in the People's Republic of China that integrate digital resources into language and literacy development.

Dell Hymes was born and raised in Portland, Oregon, where, thanks to the GI Bill, he graduated from Reed College majoring in both anthropology and literature. He went to Indiana University in anthropology but ultimately earned an MA and PhD in Linguistics. His dissertation was on the language of the Kathlamet Chinook, based on texts written down by Franz Boas. The languages and traditions of the Chinookan people of the Columbia River have remained a concern. He has taught at Harvard, Berkeley, Penn, and Virginia, retiring there in 1998, having been a Commonwealth Professor both of Anthropology and English. Most of his work has concerned linguistic anthropology, sociolinguistics, and folklore. He founded the journal *Language in Society*, and edited *Reinventing Anthropology* (1972), recently reprinted. Recent works include *"Now I Know Only So Far"* and a new edition of *"In Vain I Tried to Tell You"* (both: University of Nebraska, 2003).

Samuel Jay Keyser is Peter de Florez Professor Emeritus of Linguistics, and currently Special Assistant to the Chancellor at MIT. He is editor-in-chief of *Linguistic Inquiry*, a journal in the field of theoretical linguistics, as well as of its associated monograph and book series. His most recent book is *A Prolegomenon to a Theory of Lexical Argument Structure.* Co-authored with the late Ken Hale of MIT, it was published in the Fall of 2002 by the MIT Press. Professor Keyser has published one book of poems, *Raising the Dead.* An excerpt from his Malawi/Zambia safari journal appeared in the May 2000 issue of *The Atlantic Monthly.*

Chin W. Kim earned his Ph.D. in Lingusitics from the University of California/Los Angeles (1966). He has been teaching at the University of Illinois at Urbana/Champaign (UIUC) since 1967 and is currently Head of the Department of Linguistics. Professor Kim was a founder and President of the International Circle of Korean Linguistics (1970-80). He is currently a member of the Executive Committee of the International Society for Korean Studies (1988-), Senior advisor to Korean Association of Speech Sciences (1996-), and President of International Association for Humanistic Linguistics (1999-). His work concentrates on the fields of phonetics, phonology, Korean linguistics, writing systems, and stylistics.

Koenraad Kuiper's poetry has been published in a number of literary magazines such as *Islands*, *Landfall*, *Poetry New Zealand*, *Sport*, and *Takahe*. He has published three books of poetry; the most recent, *Timepieces*, is published in the Hazard Poets Series.

Joseph Malone is Professor Emeritus of Linguistics at Barnard College. In addition to his work in Semitic linguistics, Joe has written extensively on translation. He is the author of *The Science of Linguistics in the Art of Translation* (SUNY Albany, 1988). *Carmina Gaiana*, a collection of his poems, was published in 1997; *As Light Rises*, a volume of stories, and *Above the Salty Bay*, a novella and stories, appeared in 1999 and 2001 respectively. *The Alembic Space*, a collection of his articles on poetics and translation, will appear just as soon as the editor of the current volume can locate a publisher.

Adam Makkai is Professor of English at the University of Illlinois–Chicago. His research interests include: semantics; post-Transformational Generative grammar movements, stratificational-cognitive grammar; systemic-functional linguistics; theory and practice of translation; language of poetry; and lexicography. His main works include *Idiom Structure in English* (1972), *A Dictionary of American Idioms* (3d ed., 1995), *A Dictionary of Space English* (1973), three volumes of poetry in Hungarian, and *Cantio Nocturna Peregrini Aviumque*, an octolingual volume of poetry (English, German, French, Spanish, Italian, Latin, Russian, and Hungarian). In 1974, he founded The Linguistic Association of Canada and the United States (LACUS).

Lise Menn is a professor in the Department of Linguistics at the University of Colorado at Boulder. She is also a faculty fellow of the Institute of Cognitive Science and Associate Editor of the journal *Aphasiology*. In 1976 she received her Ph.D. in Linguistics from the University of Illinois, Urbana, specializing in the emergence of language in children. Her research interests include phonological and morphological development in children; interaction of discourse structure with syntactic defects in aphasia; and cross-linguistic comparison of language disorders. Her many publications include *The repeated morph constraint* (1984; with B. MacWhinney), *False starts and filler syllables* (1993; with Ann M. Peters), and *Methods for Studying Language Production* (2000; with N.B. Ratner), and other books and articles on language development and aphasia. She is married to fellow-linguist and poet William Bright.

Marilyn Wilkey Merritt grew up in small towns in rural southeastern Missouri, and was educated at Northwestern University, Washington University in St. Louis (anthropology), and the University of Pennsylvania, where she earned her Ph.D. in linguistics in 1976. She has been married to C. Gary Merritt since 1962. They began to work in international development in 1975 and, with their two children Brienne (McCabe) and Seth, lived in India and Kenya, later in Niger, and Senegal,

working in numerous other countries for short periods. Marilyn began writing poetry in college and has developed an interdisciplinary career around language, education, and creativity. Best known academically for her work synthesizing discourse analysis, pragmatics, and social interaction in situations of service encounters and primary classrooms, she has also served two years as a science and diplomacy fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science working on international educational policy, and has consulted for international organizations on education and cross-cultural communication. A research affiliate of the Center for Applied Linguistics since 1977, she has taught at various universities and is currently on the research faculty of the George Washington University.

Dipika Mukherjee is currently employed as Assistant Professor at Nanyang Technological University, Singpaore, where he teaches English language and communications courses.

Donna Jo Napoli is Professor of Linguistics at Swarthmore College and a writer of children's fiction. She earned her Ph.D. in Romance Languages and Literatures in 1973 from Harvard University, then did a postdoctoral year in Linguistics at MIT. She has authored five books, co-authored three, edited one, and co-edited two, ranging from theoretical linguistics to practical matters in language structure and use. She won a Leeway Foundation Award for Excellence in Fiction Writing in 1995. Her novel *The Prince of the Pond* (1992) won the New Jersey Reading Association Award for 1997. *Stones in the Water* (1997) won the Golden Kite Award of the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators and the Sydney Taylor Award of the National Association of Jewish Libraries. She received the Drexel University/Free Library of Philadelphia Citation for Excellence in Fiction (1998). Her picture book *Albert* won the Kentucky Bluegrass Award for 2003. With the late Emily Rando, Donna Jo was founding co-editor of this series of volumes of poetry by linguists and she has contributed her poetry to still other anthologies.

Yolanda Rivera-Castillo completed her BA at the University of Puerto Rico-Mayagüez, her master's degree at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and her Ph.D. at the University of California-Davis. She has taught at different universities in the US; and most recently at the University of Puerto Rico-Río Piedras in the Ph.D. program in Creole languages and literature. Her main areas of research include Creole languages, suprasegmental systems, and the Phonology-Syntax connection. Currently, she is a member of the Editorial Advisory Committee for the Journal of Pidgin and Creole Languages.

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